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Thompson, Dorothy

Address of
Miss Dorothy Thompson

[New York]

[1937]

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... Address of Miss Dorothy Thompson, delivered
at the 169th banquet of the Chamber at the Wald-
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Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York

ADDRESS OF MISS DOROTHY THOMPSON

Delivered at the 169th Annual Banquet of the Chamber
at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel

Thursday Evening, November 18, 1937

Gentlemen and ladies.—My more restless friends sometimes tell me that I am a tory. I call their attention to the fact that tonight I break one hundred and sixty-nine years of precedence and hope that it will not be only an emergency measure but the inauguration of a policy.

At the Herald Tribune conference a few weeks ago, the case for Italian Facism was presented by the son of the great Italian poet, Mr. D'ANNUNZIO. He opened his address by the categorical remark: "Every vital political movement in the world today is anti-liberal".

The candor of this remark, and, indeed, the candor of the whole speech made a great impression on me. For Mr. D'ANNUNZIO was honest enough to put his finger precisely on the issue. He did not present fascism as the antithesis to communism. He presented it as the antithesis to liberalism. His argument was that liberalism is already dead, that it is merely an inconvenient corpse lying around awaiting burial, and therefore the only choice for the intelligent person to make is whether he wants collectivism in the form of communism or collectivism in the form of fascism.

On the same platform Mr. AUHAGEN, who presented the case for German National Socialism, made the statement, "National Socialism is anti-democratic". But it was clear that he, too, meant that national socialism was the antithesis of liberal democracy. He must have meant that, because otherwise he would have been contradicting his "Fuehrer", and that is something that is not done. For all the new forms of states, which have come into existence in the last decade and a half as substitutes for the constitutional, or parliamentary state, claim to be democracies. In 1933, I remember, Mr. HITLER said that "Germany under National Socialism is the purest democracy in the world today. For nowhere in the world is so great a percentage of the people behind the established government and its Leader". MUSSOLINI in a speech

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which he made a few weeks ago in Berlin said almost exactly the same thing.

And in Russia the claim is made that the Soviet Government is the only true democracy. The argument is based on the thesis that the political state is, by its nature, merely the organ of powerful economic interests; that there can be no real political democracy without economic equality; and that therefore Russia, where alone the means of production are in the hands of the peoples' state, is the only true democracy.

I am not going to discuss this evening the merits or demerits of fascism and communism beyond calling attention to the fact that both of them call themselves democracies—true democracies, modern democracies, or economic democracies. Fascism rests its claim on the basis of having a mandate from the majority to rule. Both MUSSOLINI and HITLER claim to be the incorporated will of the people. HITLER, at least, has repeatedly subjected his major policies to popular plebiscite by secret ballot. And if we admit that a plebiscite taken under a one-party system, with the government enjoying a monopoly of the press and radio, and conducting a tremendous propaganda with the money of the taxpayers, and with terror and espionage as constant accompaniments of every activity of life—if we are to admit that a vote taken under such circumstances constitutes the will of the majority, then the claim of fascism to be some sort of a democracy may be accepted.

And, similarly, if a society in which all men are equal by virtue of nobody owning anything beyond his personal belongings is democracy, then Russia is some sort of a democracy. For it is perfectly true that in Russia nobody owns anything and everybody is poor, and the total wealth of the country—its producing power—is consolidated in a great holding company of interlocking state trusts with its entire control vested in the hands of a bureaucracy of self-appointed officials, who control the lives and work of every citizen, who issue or withhold work cards which are sentences of life or death. And although nobody owns anything, and nobody enjoys a vast income—although from time to time certain officials enjoy all the perquisites of a great income—yet the inequalities in such income as exists are fully as great as those in this country. The span between the wage of a common worker and a Stakhanovite, one of the aristocracy of speeders, is greater than the span between the income of an unskilled man and a skilled tool maker in General Motors; and the span between the incomes of the workers and of the managerial class is fully as great there as that here.

It has been a common phrase of agitators against liberal democracy that in a capitalist society freedom is only freedom to starve, but it is also true that in the western world, even in these

profoundly disorganized times of the last ten years, the only place where any considerable number of people have starved to death was the Soviet Ukraine, one of the world's richest granaries, where five million people perished from hunger for the sake of a political policy in 1931 and 1932.

But it is clear that amidst all these states that call themselves democracies it is necessary for us to redefine what we mean by the word. And we mean, of course, that form of government which, with certain modern and historical variations, exists in this country, in Great Britain, and in France, and in many of the smaller western sections—in the Scandinavian countries, in Holland and Belgium, and in Czechoslovakia. By democracy we mean parliamentary and constitutional government, civil liberties, and—as the evolutionary process has developed—a mixed system of public and private enterprise. It is against this system, as a system, that the radicals of the right and the radicals of the left are launching their attacks, and incidentally, perhaps it is because these two sets of radicals hate each other so bitterly that they have come to look so much alike. There are a number of ways in which communists and fascists are exactly alike: both are fanatics; both are careless about human life; both believe in terror; both scoff at civil liberties; and both are people with whom one cannot converse. They have found the truth and the truth has made them God-awful bores.

Now, before we begin to get the jitters and look under the bed every night for a red or a black or brown-shirt there are a few things to bear in mind. Liberal democracy has so far survived all the assaults against it in all countries where it really has roots. Italy only became a nation in the last half of the nineteenth century. Germany first became united in the Franco-Prussian war, which many people still alive can remember. Russia was a feudal absolutism until 1917. The government of Austria was best described by METTERNICH: absolutism tempered by "schlamperei". Absolutism tempered by slovenliness. The most prosperous nations in the world today are still all liberal democracies; the most prosperous meaning those with the highest standard of living for the common man. The new mythology attributes this to the fact that they are "have" nations, while the new dictatorships are "have nots".

The statement is one of those constantly reiterated shibboleths that will not stand the test of investigation. From the viewpoint of natural resources the United States and France are perfect types of "have" nations, yet the greatest industries of even this country—motors, for instance—depend upon essential raw materials not to be found here at home. Rubber, for instance. And Great Britain is, from this standpoint, the leading "have not"

nation in the world. Forty-two million people are gathered together on a highly exposed little island, where, if blockaded, they would starve to death in a fortnight. Her commonwealth consists of completely sovereign states with whom she can have preferences only according to treaties, and she enjoys no monopoly in any of her colonies. Japan, for instance, sells more goods to India than England does. Germany is not poorer than she was in 1914, but in many respects richer because technology has given her prodigious new resources at home. On less land than she possessed before the war Germany today can and does grow far more food than then because of discoveries in agro-biology. Where she used to have to send to Chile for soil-building nitrates, today she distills them out of the air—largely because of the discoveries of a German Jewish scientist, FRITZ HABER, whom a grateful nation drove into exile to die. In a world in which one makes stockings out of trees and wood out of acetylene gas, and in which no single nation however rich contains all the resources necessary for its industry, the talk of “haves” and “have nots” is meretricious. Economic nationalism is not the result of national impoverishment. National impoverishment is the result of economic nationalism. And economic nationalism is the result first, of too greedy and short-sighted capitalism pressing for political protection against reasonable foreign competition, and secondly and now overwhelmingly, is the result of militarism.

This business of adequate and inadequate resources is all relative. If Germany wants to feed, house, and clothe her people decently her resources are adequate. If she wants to maintain the greatest military machine on earth, they are not.

The dictatorships sometimes tell the democracies scornfully that they can afford to be democracies because they are rich. They are all wrong. It would be truer to say that they are rich because they are democracies. For this thing that we call democracy—about which I shall have something more to say—has this tremendous characteristic—or has had up until recently. It is a form of government which, historically, has released energy. It is this released energy which has made the democracies what they are.

If liberal democracy perishes—if it is true, as Mr. D'ANNUNZIO said that every vital movement in the world today is anti-liberal—then, surely the reason is not that we can view other Utopias and call them better. In 1932 while sitting on a hillside in Austria with my husband and trying to forget the world, I wrote in my diary:

“These years have robbed us of all of our Utopias. We have seen them all realized, and we are disillusioned. Communism is the stupid rule of a mean-minded bureaucracy, employing

terror against every energetic and courageous individual, a contemptible glorification of the mass-man and the mass-mind. Socialism is the rule of a trade-union bureaucracy, venal and unimaginative. Fascism is the rule of the top-sergeant. National Socialism is on the rise and it is the sick, hysterically affirming their health; the grocery clerk posing as the superman. Yet liberal democracy is sick, too. For all over the world, people are discontented with yesterday's rulers, disgusted with those who should be their leaders, tired of their bosses. In a country whose name I will not give you, the prime minister, supposedly a great aristocrat gets money voted out of the treasury, to compensate him for his lost estates, and tired of politics, deserts to the Riviera with a lady-friend. The prestige of the bankers has been blown into atoms, as history demonstrated how very wrong they were. Too many crooks have suddenly exploded publicly and theatrically. The latest are INSULL and KREUGER. The masses have become politically awakened, politically aware. That is the most important fact of these times. And God knows what they will do. The only countries which will weather the storm without fundamental upsets will be those where the privileged groups will make wise concessions, and where they enjoy a reputation for decency and honesty.”

I wrote that, gentlemen, in the winter of 1932, before HITLER came into power, and came home to the 1933 elections, which inaugurated in this country the New Deal.

We are now in the eighth year after the outbreak of the great depression which, in terms of human suffering and human humiliation, in revolutionary movements and drastic changes took a greater toll than the four years of the great war. It is approaching Thanksgiving, and, if I reconsider how I felt about the whole world in 1932, I have some reason to feel relief and gratitude. Because in spite of all the mistakes—egregious mistakes—which I think that we have made in these years, in spite of the fact that we have started on many paths that seem to me to demand a courageous retracing of our steps, I must honestly say that it might have been worse. And I can honestly say that unless there is another world war, I believe that liberal democracy will weather through.

But if we are to weather through, then we must honestly face the realities of the times in which we live, and honestly analyze what there is within our power of control, that really threatens the continued existence and fruition of liberal democracy.

Two of the facts which we must bear in mind I have already indicated—I recorded them in 1932. The loss of confidence in

previous leadership and the political awakening of the masses. For the latter phenomenon, the war is certainly partly responsible—largely responsible perhaps. During the war the people in all countries suddenly realized the potential powers of the state. They learned that if the state wants a man's body, it can feed, clothe, house, and transport him, regardless of finances, and regardless of sound economics. Was it not natural that when the depression hit with all the force of war, these same men should say, "You took care of us then. Take care of us now. You made us into armies then. Make us into work armies now?"

All of the totalitarian states of the world are organized on a complete war basis; they are states mobilized in a war-time economy. Some people think that is because they want and intend to make war, and of course it is possible that they will make it. But I suspect that the reason why these states are so mobilized is because that is the only form in which the state can completely control an economy. It is the only pattern which the state knows.

Well, we have quite a lot of that in this country. But it runs against the grain. Men accept it rather than nothing, but it is not a normal way of life, particularly not for an American, an Englishman, or a Frenchman. The men in W. P. A. were glad to be in it in 1933 and 1934. They want to get out of it now. It is better than nothing, but it is not opportunity.

The loss of confidence in leadership was profound in 1930-32. And, gentlemen, it was partly justified. The history of American capitalism from the Civil War to 1929 is not the history of Sir Galahad—to make an understatement. Let us tell the truth. Because we get nowhere without truth.

Financial practices were indulged in by some men and by some companies, which would not stand the test of any standards of honor and decency. I do not need to go into those practices. You all know what they were. The history of some of our greatest enterprises, of many of our railroad reorganizations, of some of our utilities have been the subject of investigators and writers who have revealed practices now known to the country at large. There is no S. E. C. in Great Britain, but in Great Britain men who dealt in the stocks of their own companies and sold the securities of their own companies short would be blackballed by the business community itself. I do not mean to imply that these practices—the watering of stocks, the manipulation of stocks between companies presumably separated, the issuance of non-voting stocks, with the voting power held in a few hands—I don't mean to imply that these had the support of the business community as a whole. I know that they did not. But neither were they openly denounced or with sufficient vigor by the business community as a whole. And the social and political results are now apparent.

Justice BRANDEIS, in 1906, when he was arguing, not as Justice BRANDEIS, the case against the Boston Consolidated Gas and Electric Company, uttered these prophetic words:

"The greatest factors making for communism, socialism or anarchy among a free people are the excesses of capital. Because as Lincoln said of slavery, 'every drop of blood drawn with the lash will be requited by another drawn with the sword.' It is certain that among a free people, every excess of capital must in time be repaid by the excessive demands of those who have not the capital. Every act of injustice on the part of the rich, will be met by another act or many acts of injustice on the part of the people."

Thus, Justice BRANDEIS foresaw long ago the growth of the kind of punitive spirit with which the entire business community, including the most honorable men, would eventually have to contend. I may say that Justice BRANDEIS' attitude toward the Boston utilities seems a paragon of equity and justice today.

When the people rebel, they rebel through the political instrument, for it is the only instrument they have. And I should also like to say this: Their use of the political instrument, and their behavior in general, is usually copied from their politically powerful predecessors. A new class, becoming politically conscious, adopts the pattern of political behavior from those whom it wishes to supplant. We are now much perturbed and rightly so about the multiplication of pressure groups and their enormous demands upon government and upon the public purse. Labor and farmers and unemployed seem to have no interest in government except what they can get out of it. But did their predecessors, when they were more politically powerful than now, have any other interest? Did they not bribe legislatures? Did they not cynically connive with the most corrupt machine politicians? How many of them encouraged their sons to sacrifice remunerative business careers for public service? How many of them sacrificed their own time to political work? Were they not satisfied to buy their representatives rather than choose them from amongst their own number? That spirit has not yet died out in America amongst the privileged classes. It is not two weeks, since I heard a well-to-do man say, apropos Huey Long: "Well, we could have bought him, anyhow."

I know that this is not characteristic of the business world. But it is too characteristic. One can justly accuse the American plutocracy of having actively contributed to the breakdown of social forms and social standards. For every rich man whose life was a pattern of decent behavior, there were those who in themselves or in their families, constantly outraged and perverted the public taste—and those were the ones who got into the newspapers. In

the days of the great boom bubble, the newspapers were full of tales of young millionaire heirs who married torch singers, sometimes with highly disastrous consequences, of spectacular snob marriages of American millionaire daughters to broken down European princes, of elopements from drunken parties, with young men and young women waking in the morning with headaches and wives or husbands. Those stories still go on. There was one last week.

The American plutocracy stood indicted before the writers and poets of this country, for its social irresponsibility. The culture itself was indicted. My husband wrote a whole series of books—and my husband is not an agitator, he is a bourgeois American, American since the seventeenth century, as middle class and as intrinsically conservative as a baked potato—but what do all those books of his say? Just one thing. This civilization is not good enough. This civilization of advertising and ballyhoo, of high pressure salesmanship and press agency, of social snobbery and social climbing, of men measured in terms of the size and cost of their motor cars, of labor treated as a commodity, of police brutality masking as law and order, of art and science treated as lackeys of wealth, of judges put into office by politicians—this civilization is not good enough! That was not the reason why we opened the wilderness. That was not that for which we fought Indians, and nature, and each other. That is not the American dream!

It is of the greatest significance—a significance unnoted incidentally by the rulers of our destinies—that at the beginning of this century a whole galaxy of writers emerged, novelists, essayists, and poets, every one of whom recorded profound discontent with the values of contemporary American civilization. THEODORE DREISER, SINCLAIR LEWIS, EUGENE O'NEILL, WILLA CATHER, EDNA MILLAY, ROBINSON JEFFERS, JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS, CARL SANDBURG, VAN WYCK BROOKS—you cannot classify them as liberals or conservatives or radicals. They were men and women of all temperaments. But in all of them there was either rebellion or discontent, or, as in Miss CATHER and in ROBERT FROST and EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON, a harking back to older values. Nowhere was there any affirmation of what existed at the time.

What I am getting at with this is that even before the war, and certainly long before the depression, the demand was beginning for a reevaluation of the things this country is supposed to live by. The social historian notices these things. They matter. One reads about them, years later, when something that was is no more. But the men who could do most, do not notice them until the pressure comes in a less artistic form. The French Revolution began with a play—"The marriage of Figaro." Its fathers were the French

encyclopedists. The artists are ahead of change. And the artists of this country, and for fully thirty years, have been repudiating the idea of a civilization whose standards are set by the money-getting scramble.

This loss of confidence in standards and leadership can only be restored under new standards and under new leadership. In my belief that new leadership has not yet asserted itself in this country. The New Deal is not a New Deal. It is rather, in practice, an attempt to democratize the vices of the New Era. But already and for that reason, it is losing its resonance and its vitality. The campaign against the economic royalists is about played out. It will only revive with real popular support if the economic royalists regain a large part of their power, and abuse it—and then it will revive, I can promise you, with a virulence not yet seen. I cannot prove what I am saying, and I may be wrong. But, without wishing to seem pretentious, I am convinced that what this country is groping after is a new way of life, a way of life more dignified, more beautiful, more serene, and more humane. You notice I do not use the word more "humanitarian". The humanitarian wants to hand people a dole. The humane person wants to give them opportunities.

An individual is happy to the extent that he is able to get along with himself; to think well of himself. A civilization is happy according to the same rule. This civilization has not been happy for a long time.

The New Deal will not peter out because of the opposition of the economic royalists, whoever the gentlemen may be—I said the other night that I only found one definition that fits them, and that is a rich Republican. The New Deal is petering out because it displays in itself the very characteristics against which the public conscience has been in unconscious revolt. Do you mind if I tell you that we are tired of being sold by super-salesmen? We are tired of being sold. We don't want to be sold by government propaganda any more than we want to be sold by public relations counsels. We are tired of conspicuous waste. We were tired of it before, and we don't like it any better when the public treasury indulges in it, than when business indulges in it. We are a long-suffering people. But we are still a skeptical people. The last generation of Americans was from Missouri and this generation says, "Yeah? You and who else?"

Meanwhile, until we shake down to that form of life becoming to our more adult and realistic years, let us consider from where, at present, our democracy is threatened—if it is threatened. Against what should we be on our guard?

First, against encroachments—to quote Justice BRANDEIS—by "men of zeal but little understanding"—encroachments upon con-

stitutional government itself. All over the world, where liberal democracies have perished, the process has been preceded by encroachments upon the constitutional system. It is true that in times of emergency all democracies are likely to delegate exceptional powers to the executive. That was true in Rome in the days of the Republic, and it is true today. Poincaré had a virtual dictatorship in France in 1926, when the fall of the franc had created a serious crisis; there have been temporary dictatorships of a sort in Belgium; and for a period quite exceptional powers were granted to the national government in England. It is a question indeed whether parliamentary democracies could exist through serious crises without these increased executive powers. The test comes when the powers are used to alter the form of the government itself, and thereby create the mechanism whereby emergency powers may be perpetuated. The only possible bulwark against this sort of encroachment is the sensitivity of public opinion as reflected in the legislature—in Congress. And it is pleasing to record that that sensitivity exists in this country. There was little popular opposition to Mr. ROOSEVELT assuming extended authority in 1933. But a tremendous howl went up, when, in 1937, he attempted to secure the reorganization of the Supreme Court. And how almost comic has been the denouement of that piece of tawdry shenanigan! Eventually there was elevated to the Supreme Bench as the Great Liberal, the Great Investigator, whose only conspicuous failure as an inquisitor came when he was forced to investigate and report upon his own past!

The second thing which has brought liberal democracy crashing into chaos, to be buried under red flags or swastikas, is the class struggle, allowed to reach the point where it is uncompromisable. This is the greatest menace to democratic government today. MUSSOLINI came into power in Italy, for one reason and for one reason alone; a deadlock had been reached between capital and labor. The GIOLITTI government was playing a cynical game. Without being a labor government, it was using the labor discontent in the country and fanning it into flames, in the hope of using its pressure to wring demands from the Italian economic royalists. When the deadlock reached the point where industry and the whole of economic life was paralyzed, one of the men who had been most actively supporting the radical labor movement, and had actually, only a few months before been advocating the sit-down strike, went to the industrialists and got a mandate to dissolve the differences and establish order. His name was BENITO MUSSOLINI. The industrialists hailed him as a savior, and he has been busily but steadily expropriating them ever since.

How are we going to meet the problems presented by an awakened, and more politically conscious population of workers? Are we going to fight blindly, full of hate, or are we going to try to see what lies at the root of the unrest? Are we going to present constructive criticism of government policies? Or are we going to confine ourselves to fulminating that Mr. JOHN LEWIS is undoubtedly paid by Moscow? Which he undoubtedly is not.

We are never going back to where we were in 1929. This chaotic awakening of labor and its demand for a place in the sun, rises from many causes, and they are not all, by any means, economic—many of them are psychological. Labor wants greater continuity in employment. The working man wants to be considered as a person, and not as a commodity, bought on the open market. A few days ago, I read a remarkable letter addressed by a man, whose name I knew, to my husband. He had been an organizer of the American Communist Party and had stood fairly high in its counsels until a short time ago. Then he had gotten out, because of his disgust at party tactics, and his disgust at the ruthlessness and cynicism of the leaders and their subservience to Russian dictation. But what was interesting in his letter was his description of who are American communists. "They are little men," he said, "whose egos have never found any outlet. They have never felt, anywhere, that they belonged, or that anyone cared anything about them or about their opinions."

I am sure that what he says is true. Totally inadequate efforts have been made in most industries, to understand the psychological and human needs of the workers. And yet the very same inquiring, adventuring spirit which has made American technological achievement so grandiose could, I am perfectly sure, if brought to bear on the human problem, produce astonishing results.

The Wagner Labor Relations Act will not work. It is too ambiguous and too partisan a piece of legislation. But you cannot beat a horse with no horse. We need to get public opinion behind something like the British Labor Disputes Act, and work, at long last, toward something like equity in labor-capital relations.

And, finally, what has destroyed liberal democracy in formerly democratic countries, has been disordered government finances. Do not forget that the disordered finances of Germany, and the imperative necessity of government retrenchment after a fine spending orgy on borrowed money, in 1931 and 1932, was the immediate cause of the invoking of dictatorial powers, not by Mr. HITLER, but by his predecessors. They started governing under the famous paragraph 48 of the constitution—the one granting the President the power to dissolve Parliament—when it was found

to be impossible to reduce appropriations sufficiently to balance the budget.

But we have got to learn to combine the demand for order in government finance with the willingness to make personal sacrifices. After the war STANLEY BALDWIN in England gave up one-fifth of his personal fortune to help retire the British war debt.

We are seeing all over the world a growing statism—étatism, the essence of which is that a larger and larger portion of national income goes to pay for government and the benefits which government usually very expensively distributes. The process constitutes a redistribution of the national income, some of which may be necessary; it is necessary, but in no wise adds to the national income which is what is really important. It is a process extremely difficult to check once it starts. I am afraid that we shall see in England in the next year or so some serious results of the terrifically high taxation for necessary armament superimposed upon already prodigious taxation for social purposes. How well served even the social purposes are must also come into question even in England, where there exist an efficient civil service and a very high standard of service to the government. In such a situation things have already reached the stage where the average middle class family of England cannot afford to have more than one child because of the taxes which it has to pay, and this is in approximately the class where there is the highest expectation of producing healthy and competent progeny. This seepage of statism takes place without any source of criteria. Our Congressmen are not asking themselves what proportion of the gross national income can profitably be spent by government. They make the appropriations and then expect the national income to produce them, taking an advance lien. Some of you may have guessed that I have no enthusiasm for this growing statism. I have never been able to see that any virtue resides in the state superior to the virtues of the society which elects it. I dislike the growing disproportion between the regulators and the regulated. For the regulators never yet invented a machine, or discovered new sources of energy, or made two blades of grass grow where one grew before, or, indeed, created anything at all.

I think that the life and energy begins to evaporate from a society when the men who have power are not those who do things but those who make statistics about them; not those who grow potatoes, but those who make potato quotas; not those who turn wheels, but those who turn swivel chairs; not those who employ men, but those who make blueprints; not those who work, but those who organize the workers; not those who govern, but those who write political columns.

The best societies are those which are to the greatest extent self-regulatory and do not require coercion to enforce their behavior. In other words, the best societies are those governed least by force, or even by written laws, but by standards and unwritten codes, by civilized inhibitions, by widely accepted prejudices, in favor of honesty, generosity and fair play. At present considerable attention is being paid to Sweden. We are told that it is a fine country because it has so large a number of cooperatives and so happy a dose of socialism. Well, I know Sweden and my guess is that it is a fine country because you can leave your bicycle by the roadside for a week and no one will steal it. And I call your attention to the fact that for many years, at the opening of the Swedish parliament, it has been the custom for the leader of the opposition to rise and move for the abolition of the monarchy. No group, as far as I know, has the slightest desire to abolish the monarchy, but it has become a tradition in Sweden to propose it, and with that proposal remind the throne itself that it is occupied subject to continued good behavior.

The liberal spirit is the breath of liberal democracy. And the liberal spirit is something instantly recognizable but very difficult to define. It has about it a refreshing common sense—by which I do not mean the rule of thumb, but the recognition, necessary to sanity, that there is sense and reason in a society, and that to some extent, at least, that sense and reason are common to all men. It is even-tempered, and of even tempo. It has its prejudices, but is willing to subject them to discussion. It asks only time to consider. And that, right now, is what we need more than anything else. Time to consider. This Congress, right now, in the next thirty days, has been asked to pass four bills of the most far-reaching implications, any one of which ought to take an honest and intelligent group months and months to consider and deliberate. Reform, and constant reform, is a necessity of democracy. But reform in a hurry—I wrote the other day—is jerry-built, and it blows down in the first storm. If you doubt that, read the business reports of the last three months. Believe it or not, it wasn't planned that way.

To believe in liberal democracy is to believe that there is more good will in society than ill will; more ground for agreement than disagreement; more things that the majority of people want to preserve and cherish than they want to destroy; more that they love than that they hate; more to unite men and classes than to divide them; and that to find these principles of unity and agreement, through deliberation and compromise, is the duty of civilized human beings.

The adventure in popular government has gone on in this country for 150 years. And attended by the new risks of this revolutionary era, it is still the greatest adventure in the world today. And still worth one's faith, and one's courage, and one's perspicacity.

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